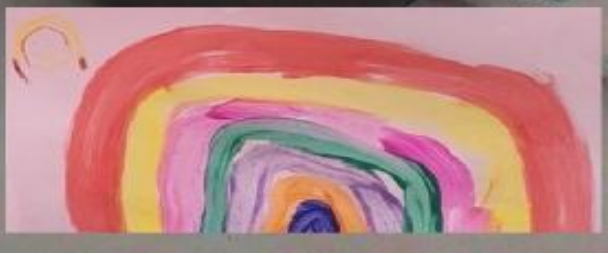
DREAMS FROM I.T.U.

My Life In Their Hands

Michael and Yvonne Monaghan



Michael and Yvonne Monaghan

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I dedicate this Document to My lovely wife, Yvonne along with my two children Michelle and Michael and my sister Margaret, Mel taken far to young all my friends and all the Nursing Staff in H.D.U and I.T.U at PRH Telford

I thank you for my Life

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1

Prologue

OK, some of you will have read my short book “Dreams from I.T.U.” this is a slightly expanded version which covers a brief time before the main even and some time after.

I hope you enjoy the read and I hope it will give you some idea of what it is like either side of life support.

2

Before The Big Event

My story begins about twelve months before the big event.

I have been married to my lovely wife Yvonne since 1982 although we have been together since 1974, we both have a passion for motor bikes when the bug bit again in my late fifties I bought myself a second hand RF900 Suzuki, not realising what a beast it was.

After a bit of steady riding around getting use to it again after a 15 year break, we decided to have a ride out to Dinkies Dinner, a well-known watering hole for bikers from all over. This is where we first saw the members of the Raven Riders, after a bikers nod to say hi they went on their way, we had a cuppa and went on our way, after a few weeks we had a ride to the Raven cafe at Whitchurch about 20 miles from home (32k).

We got to meet a few Raven Riders and introduced ourselves, they were all very pleasant and got to speak although briefly to a chap who seemed very popular, this guy’s name was Barry “Shredd” Walters as we later found out.

We did our very first charity run one wet Sunday morning from the Ponderosa Cafe, Horseshoe Pass, Llangollen. We got to know a few more bikers on that ride out. The more times we visited the Raven, the more we got to know the people who went there.

We did a few more ride outs and raising money for the then Shropshire and Staffordshire Blood Bikes (SSBB) later joining forces with Cheshire Blood Bikes to become “S.S.C Blood Bikes”. A marvellous bunch of Guys and Gals and all volunteers. They don’t just deliver blood to many hospitals around the country but also baby milk, and various bits that need testing. They are always looking for volunteers answering the phone (despatching riders) fund raising and also riders..

I have added a few more stories that I recalled as the time has passed, more will probably come to light as time goes on, but for now I will go with what I have here.

3

That Saturday

Date 20/02/16

One of the last things I can remember was doing some work at the Raven Cafe at Prees, coming back home with Yvonne and saying that I felt like crap. She had already been coughing and not feeling well either.

I can vaguely recall going to the doctors on the Thursday evening with Yvonne, she was given antibiotics.

Although the doctor told me I had a slight temperature, he could find nothing else wrong with me.

Yvonne said that when I came downstairs on the following Saturday morning, I said. “I’m not getting any better am I?” So she called the Shrop Doc and so the story begins.

4

The Arrival

Date 27/02/16

This part was related to me by Yvonne.

When I arrived at Shrop Doc at the P.R.H Telford Yvonne had to help me to reception without me falling over. When they finally saw me they gave me oxygen at an unbelievable rate, and one of the nurses kept coming over because she could not believe how much oxygen I was on.

I presume at this point they admitted me into M.A.U (medical assessment unit) and from there they admitted me to H.D.U — I.T.U where I proceeded to get comfy for the long haul.

Somewhere around this point Yvonne was told that if they had brought me in on the Sunday instead of Saturday, this would have been a very short story, and it would not have been written by me.

Date 28/02/16

I can remember having a catheter fitted and saying to Yvonne. “This is going to hurt.” But apparently it did not.

5

Baked Potato

One of my memories of my care was just after I was admitted, I was having a baked potato to which Yvonne said I seemed to enjoy little did we know at the time but it was to be the last bit of solid food to pass my lips for nearly eight weeks. Ironically, it was to be one of my first solid foods when I came back.

Same Day Hiccups Later on after having my baked potato Yvonne said I developed Hiccups, and I became more and more agitated and restless. It was around Monday morning I believe when they decided they needed to put me in an induced coma and so my journey into the unknown began.
Date End of February Right from now on it will be a mix of dreams and reality.

6

Where is my Bike?

As far as I can make out this is the first of my journeys into the unknown.
Walking down the road in the early hours of the morning looking for my bike I came across a shed with the lights on, and I thought why not check it out? I crawled through the hedge into the shed, having a look around, when I am confronted by two or three people, I can't quiet remember but definitely two though,
"Michael Monaghan, just the person we are looking for." One of them said, I was confused how they knew my name, I apologised for being on their land, they said not to worry as they needed some welding doing for a film, we had a small discussion and I went to leave (this comes in to play at a later date).

I found myself sitting on a bench or table, then lying down from which I could not then get up, it felt like I was paralysed, it was very annoying being unable to move; I think this was the moment that they put me into an induced coma.
When I came around many weeks later I recognised the doctor as the one who said they were looking for me in the shed.
You have to remember that no matter how daft or strange this all seems, in my world, they were real.

7

Got to meet Lemmy

This is the scariest and most upsetting part of the journey for me. As in my head, this was very real. I had a strange feeling looking around rows of blurred people standing behind the church pews from ground level in the cold and damp. Looking around the church and then seeing Lemmy from Motorhead standing there, and I was thinking what's he doing here? He's dead. Then seeing my lovely wife gliding across the floor in a long white dress and thinking why is she here too? Then I realised
Am I dead???
I can remember feeling scared and upset, I don't know why I had this dream, maybe I was closer than I thought?

8

Down the garden

One of the dreams I used to have but not so often , was sort of set in a large shed in which various people would do different things to me, very weird when I think about it but I can still recall some of the things they would do.
They were dressed in medical gear, the type you see in research centres, long gloves, full face masks, and coveralls.
They would work on me and generally be talking to each other about everyday things, telling me to keep still and stop trying to get up, suddenly they would stop working on me pull the covers off the wall grab their ordinary clothes and just walk out.

9

1800s

One dream I had a couple of times was set in the late nineteenth century.
I'm not really sure where this one comes from, but I think it might be something to do with a poem I recalled. This is the hardest one to describe.
It was set in a rickety house, I would say an old house, but it was in the mid-1800's. The story never really goes anywhere but I can recall a stout well-dressed gentleman and a

small child, it all seemed to revolve around a fireplace we would sit and talk, in another scenario of the dream I was crawling along a path hiding from various people.

10

On The Boat

One of the most vivid dreams I had involved a large ship. This was something to do with the World War 2.
This ship was involved in various dreams and had something to do with the original meeting of the doctors at the beginning of the story.
I can recall standing for about ninety minutes whilst listening to somebody recall stories about what the ship achieved during World War 2.
I also remember tall people standing around with long cloaks on, and one big black hole where their faces should be; they would just stand there and watch.

11

In the Army Now

I had various dreams about army life, one of the first involved someone who I recognised from a medical programme. He was preparing me to meet Princess Ann, who was supposed to be visiting, and I had the job of greeting her. In the end, I never got to meet her as she never got to tour the hospital. It was when I was in this part of the dream that I remember the doctor and someone else telling me not to pull the wires and the tubes out as they were keeping me alive, and me trying to work out how a tube and a piece of wire would keep me alive? As it turned out it, was my tracheostomy and my feeding and fluid tubes that I was trying to remove.
Tracheotomy
Surgical Procedure
Tracheotomy, or tracheostomy, is a surgical procedure which comprises of making an incision on the anterior aspect of the neck and opening a direct airway through an incision in the trachea. The resulting stoma can serve independently as an airway or as a site for a tracheal tube or tracheostomy tube to be inserted; this tube allows a person to breathe without the use of the nose or mouth.

12

Manoeuvres

This involved going through what to do when the army went on manoeuvres, which involved a lot of standing around whilst listening to the sounds of gunfire as they practised. I was told they were in Wolverhampton, if I remember right something went wrong and a lot came back with serious injuries.

In the ward where they were taken I can remember a lot of coughing and one guy dying, and many people doing rehab work on various exercise machines.

Various other memories I will recall as best as I can. More manoeuvres this time in a local shopping centre where a demo was set up for the public, this involved having some tube or wire being inserted down my throat to make me cough, this happened in various places, I checked with Yvonne on this one and she said yes I had something pushed down my throat to clear my lungs she said it must have hurt some times as I would try to stop them. Yes, I can remember this. It did not hurt too much; it was more sore than anything,,

More manoeuvres in a local village occurred, but I was left in the house that we had taken over and I sat in the corner trying to figure out why I was there, unable to move I could see various drinks around the room which I asked for but none were ever given to me. I settled down for the night and as usual never gave it a thought to why I was suddenly in the army. The one thing that bothered me was the inability to have a proper drink for a while after I came around because of having a tracheostomy. Once this was removed I could drink, and after passing a S.A.L.T test (speech and language therapy) they gave me the all clear to eat normally, one of the simple things in life I missed.

13

Filming

Don’t know why I kept dreaming about the army? This one involved some sort of army people carrier, I don’t really understand but will try to describe it as best I can. It seemed to be based around a TV film where we drove up and down what appeared to be a war zone being shot at, if this was for a film the explosions seemed real, we were eventually hit and were trapped inside for what seemed like a couple of hours, but because of technical difficulties we had to redo some of the filming. I can remember

hearing a lot of noise and banging. I was later told by Yvonne I had been for a body scan whether this caused the noise, who knows?

14

Boxing Gloves

Another dream about boats. This one is about a boat that you could hopefully get a bargain of sorts by handing over a sizeable amount of money, but as in life there is no such thing as a bargain.

It starts off with them asking you what you wanted and you handing over money, then sitting back and waiting. As those of you who know me know I have no patience, and true to form I started to interfere with the cover. Apart from thinking why are all the beds like the ones in the hospital, how do they get everything on the boat? If you were lucky, you got what you asked for if not then tough. I can remember poking and prodding around finding what looked like switches and wires, yes, you guessed it I had asked for a new motorbike, and being told to leave them alone, me being me I just carried on; they told me that if I kept on they would put gloves on me, yes I carried on and ended up with the gloves on. After I left the hospital, I described this event to Yvonne after Chelle had mentioned something about wearing boxing gloves she said yes they had put these (she refers to them as Mickey Mouse Gloves) on to stop me pulling out the wires and tubes. Although I got my thumb out they took them off after a while. Hard to believe when I was having this experience that my wife and daughter were actually sat not two feet away.

I never got my new bike.

15

My Wife's Story

This was a strange one as there are many personal memories in this one I will just skip over the dream.

It starts off with me being about 15yrs old, although we did not meet till I was 17yrs; it sort of covers Yvonne's early life, but most of this happened before we ever meet. It involved some of her recent relatives playing some of her family from years ago. As you walked around the house, they acted it out in the form of a play. My mate of many years

Nick played the farther in law and I can remember talking to him, telling him I will go out with one of his daughters later on in life..
Nick also played a part around a plane that used to fly around and we would watch it from an old room above what seemed to be an old barn, it only had one small bulb in to light it up but it gave off an extraordinary amount of heat. We would watch the plane land and try to find it, but when we were looking for it, it would suddenly appear above us. Nick also presented me with an album of various songs that I liked with pictures of me flying, I used to wonder where he got the pictures from.

16

Sleeping at the Raven

Now, I don't know if this dream followed on from another one? But it was not a reoccurring dream, as some others were.
Right, as most of you reading this will know Yvonne and myself are members of the bikers family known as The Raven Riders Prees Cafe, well this one involves the said café and Yvonne.
I can't remember how I arrived at the café but as usual I am in a bed unable to move when someone asks me what I am doing, I presume that I am trying to get out of bed and the nurse is trying to stop me. "Come to give you a hand with the party, but has it has finished I will give you a hand to clean up." It is at this point that I am looking around thinking, what are all these beds doing in the café? I can remember asking if someone could give me a lift home or at least help me outside so I could thumb a lift home.
Apparently they phoned Yvonne up and asked her who Barrie was she said "He's a Raven Rider" "can you get him to pop in and calm him down (me) as he is getting argumentative." Yvonne said she would get my daughter to call around but in the meantime I had calmed down, anyway. I can vaguely recall a nurse talking on the phone while I argued with another nurse, not one of the proudest moments in my life.

17

Star man

This is another hard one to describe, but I will do my best. I had this dream in various situations; it starts off in a house in Shrewsbury, when I enter the room I notice the walls are made from a material with star-shaped corners and with people in these corners, although I could recognise the voices I could not see who they were, they were touching me and calling my name, I could not get out of the room. It was always the same voices when I had this dream.

18

Auction on the ship

This was one of the most vivid and regular dreams I had. It seemed to happen every other day. It was based on a different ship to the others and seemed to consist of job lots of various things from tools to cleaning stuff.

I used to have my own room on this ship and a nurse looking after me, it always seemed to be the same nurse who rarely spoke and stayed by my side a lot, so I wondered if this was the same person? Yvonne said there was a nurse who was very quiet in real life, maybe it was the same person?

Anyway, back to the ship. I would stay till the end of the auction and would try to leave, as I was always in a bed on the ship as in real life I would try to get out of the bed and they would try to stop me from getting out at this point, I would get a bit ratty as I could not understand why I could not move and get out of bed.

I can remember someone tell me off yet again for trying to get out of bed and undoing all the good work that had been done, but to me that did not mean a thing because I could not figure out what was wrong; in my mind, this was just normal.

The guy who ran the auction said he was selling up, and a few of my friends bought it off him and carried on with selling on the ship. This dream seemed to carry on through most of my stay. I never really enjoyed being on that ship as they would not let me off at the end of the auction, just tell me to go to sleep.

The ship was always based in Christchurch, which is down south, but never really left port. Just when the tide came in, you could not get off.

19

Telford International Airport

Right, this was a regular dream much as the previous story about the auction, and most of the time followed on from it. This was a flight from Telford International Airport, yes I know it sounds daft but that's the way it was, for those of you who don't live near Telford, they don't actually have an airport (not yet anyway). Again most of the time I was accompanied by the same quiet nurse, this flight was based on yet another auction although I cannot recall buying anything.

I can recall feeling something being stuck into my stomach and being told it was to stop me being sick, part of my meds I think.

Sometimes we would land in Italy and I would get off and go for a walk around. One of the last times I went there I was attacked, and they stole my credit card. After checking with a family member he said it was safe.

One dream involves a police chase on motor bikes up and down the seafront in Italy. I remember landing back at Telford International Airport two or three times, getting off the plane and never being able to leave the airport. I would think to myself I am not getting on tomorrow and sure enough I would find myself back on it flying to Italy again? I can remember getting in contact with a relative in Christchurch and asking about a plane that used to go to Italy and on the way back land on a car park, she said did it have a blue bench on the park and I said yes and she said it really existed so I was happy with her confirmation.

20

Plane crash

If I remember right, this one was set on the outskirts of Shrewsbury when this event took place. On hearing that a light aircraft had crashed, and that the person who had crashed it should not have been flying as he did not have a licence, and we went around to his friend's house to hide from the police, don't know why as we had done nothing wrong?

When the police arrived it turned out that they knew the owner of the house and they said all would be good and we settled down for the night. After some time I could see things moving around in the dark when I asked what they were, he said
“Just meerkats,”.

21

Mobile Hairdresser

Set on the boat yet again was a hairdresser’s, and I can remember this young guy coming around asking people if they wanted to try this new way of styling your hair that he had invented with a laser, If you wanted to try it you first had to sign a form waving all responsibility from him which made me a little bit suspicious to start with.
The first person to have this treatment was my sister, after which she was very ill just and sat in the chair being sick and coughing a lot. The next person to have this treatment was also another member of the family.
The treatment involved sitting in a chair and having a laser pointing at your head. I was just lying there watching and thinking he seems to be leaving this a long time, and slowly watching his head starting to glow after a while the guy came back switching off the laser and then going saying nothing. Until I actually saw this person who had the treatment, I really thought he would suffer in later life. The relief when he walked in to visit me was unbelievable.

22

The Isle of Wight

This dream seemed to occur in various forms, sometimes in the form of a cartoon, sometimes in normal form?
Right then, here we go. When I had this dream I always seemed to be able to taste saline, but apparently I had a lot of saline iv drips so this could be it.
Sometimes the dream would be cartoon like with hills and cars when driving around, and sometimes it was all normal? The one I seem to remember the most, is that of walking along the shore and hearing the sound of ships bells (these later seemed to be the alarms on my life support), when I would be approached by a small child and asked

if he could catch a fish for me to eat, although I don't like fish that much I said okay and he would ask me to pick one out. Now the funny thing about this story is that although I stood on the beach, the sea was behind a wire fence which he proceeded to climb up and dive over into the water, whereupon he would catch the fish I had pointed out to him. After he had caught the fish, he asked me if his mother could cook it for me and we would walk along till we came across some containers, like the ones off a ship where his mother sat by an open fire and she cooked it for me, occasionally someone would shout at us and chase us but they never caught us.

We would sit by the sea sometimes and just talk about things in life, and occasionally family members would appear and talk, I presume this could have been visiting time and perhaps they were talking to me.

The cartoon version never lasted long. It was just like watching cars driving around up and down hills with their lights shining in the dark.

23

Grow your own Meerkats

Yes, that's right, one thing I learned on the dark side was how to grow your own meerkats. This must be one of the last dreams I had, as far as I could tell.

I was just going for a roam around the village where I live when I met up with one of my mates, who asked me to go around to his house because he has something to show me.

I go inside his house and look around and try to figure out what all these frames are for; they look like empty pinball machines.

"They are for growing meerkats in." He said. Yes, I know it sounds daft, but I am on the other side now.

You have to get the temperature right otherwise they could not germinate, if they get too hot they will explode; the trouble is, each one is different. I never manage to grow any as they would explode.

I do remember my daughter bringing in some seeds, but I could never find them. Maybe she didn't?

24

Mad Helen

This is one of the stories that I recalled later on after the first part, so I will tag it on here. Although I have never been to Beirut, it turns out that my niece appears to have bought a flat there, so I thought I would pay her a surprise visit. She seemed very surprised when I climbed through the window, boy was she surprised. I stayed there talking for a while and she showed me around, but it was too hot for me so I left. Looking back at this, it took place in the old tax office in Walker street, Wellington.

25

Front Room

After being dropped off outside the house where I was brought up and lived for about 25 years, I was lying on the floor trying to figure out why I was back at my childhood home instead of my own home, also why they put things around my ankles to strengthen them for some reason, and not being able to move my legs?

26

Bits and Pieces

Here are some bits and pieces that I can recall, but they did not seem to last long.
Going into a room upstairs, looking out of a window and watching a biplane flying around, and it was boiling in that room.
Why had my old school class room at Orleton lane suddenly turned into my workshop?
Sat outside a white house on the Admaston road, Wellington having a smoke, talking to passers-by.

Listening to engines revving and a load of young lads shouting and making a noise outside where the nurses were having something to eat.

Although I say this is the end a lot of dreams and experience's I have written about here are a lot more involved than I have stated, if I see you and you want to know a little bit more than just ask.

P.S. Even now coming up to two years since I went into Hospital every time I read this I still get runny eyes, It is sometimes hard for me to come to terms with what happened but I think it was and always will be harder for my lovely wife and my family that includes my big sister Marg…

Thank you all again.

27

Yvonne's Story

The way it happened:

25th Feb 2016

Both of us were feeling poorly, hadn't felt well for a week or so. I made an appointment to see the doctor for both of us, I went in first, turned out I had a terrible chest infection and was given a high dose of antibiotics, Mick went in after me and when he came out, I said what had they given him (bearing in mind he was worse than me) he said "nothing", but he told him "he had got a slight temperature."

Neither of us were eating much, we just couldn't stomach it, we both felt sick all the time.

27th Feb 2016

Saturday morning:

I got up and went downstairs and made a drink, Mick came down a bit later, he went to the toilet and then came into the living room, he was a bit wobbly on his feet so he sat down looked at me and said, "I'm not getting any better am I?" Because the doctors are closed on a Saturday I phoned Shrop Doc. I explained what Mick's symptoms were, and they asked me to bring him in to the surgery at the Princess Royal Hospital, Mick's sister Margaret drove us there.

When we got to the hospital Marg dropped us as close to the surgery as possible and she went to park the car. I struggled to get Mick down the path as he could hardly stand, let alone walk. He was all over the place.

We got called in to see the nurse; she asked a few questions, took his temperature. That was 40.6 which is very high. He was having trouble breathing, so she put him on a nebuliser, which did not help. Needless to say, he was admitted to the M.A.U (Medical Assessment Unit). All the staff worked on Mick. They fitted him with a catheter and one sister came down because she could not believe how much oxygen he required, he needed 90% oxygen. He was in a bad way and it worried me sick.

28th Feb 2016

They admitted him to I.T.U. I went to see him; he managed to eat a Jacket potato and have a drink of tea, after which he got hiccups.

That was the last solid food he was to have until the 18th April and the last time I saw him awake because the next day he was in respiratory failure and they put him into an induced coma and then put him on a ventilator. A nurse told me if we had not taken him to hospital when we did, he would not be here today.

Mick had pneumonia, flu, and sepsis. His body was shutting down.

Doctors told me Mick might not make it. I broke my heart and said I just can't lose him. I went into the ward and sat by the side of his bed and held his hand and prayed so hard that he would pull through all this. I didn't say anything to our son and daughter; I just could not accept what the doctors had told me.

From the time they admitted him to ITU I was with him every day, even though I was ill as well. From the 29th Feb we visited Mick every day, he was heavily sedated, but every day was the same for me because every time I got to the hospital and walked up to the double door to ITU I felt sick with worry because I just didn't know what to expect? Was he still the same, or had he got worse?.

It was horrible, sitting there looking at all the tubes and monitors that were keeping him alive, and praying they would bring him back.

11th March

I was walking around the supermarket getting a few bits and bobs to take into the hospital when my phone rang; It was the hospital, and you can imagine what was going through my mind, I thought no please let him be okay; the doctors had decided to put a Trachy in, I said if it would make it easier, shave his beard off. You can imagine the shock I got when I saw him, because he always had a beard, I took one look at him, turned to Marg and said. "He looks look your mother." I didn't like it.

They put a lot of work into looking after Mick. Now and then they had to feed a tube down through his Trachy to clear all the rubbish off his lungs. Not a pleasant thing to watch.

They did his OB's every hour and turned him to stop him getting bed sores.

The time had come to try and drop the sedation, but every time they tried his heart rate and blood pressure went through the roof so they had to put it up again. The doctors once again told me that Mick still might not pull through.
This time I had to be brave and upfront with Michelle and Mikey. It was the hardest thing I ever had to do, and I never want to do it again. Every night I got home from the hospital they asked me how's dad today? any improvement? So I had to tell them, Mikey got upset and went into the kitchen and had a little cry, but I told Charlotte, his girlfriend, that I had no choice in having to tell him. I went to bed and cried myself to sleep, as I did every night. The bed was so big and empty without him.
I am not a religious person, but every night I prayed he would come back to us. He is the love of my life and I couldn't live without him.

2nd April
They managed to drop the sedation a little. Although he still wasn't with us, he gave me a kiss, one I didn't think I would ever get again; he was coming back to us slowly.
After that they dropped his sedation a little every day. He still didn't know what was going on, not really. Because of the Trachy he couldn't speak, but we could lip read the odd word, I will never forget he told us to f**k off, because we kept telling him off for trying to pull his tubes and Trachy out.

4th April
They put a Talk valve in his Trachy for a short while; it was hard he had to put in a lot of effort to make it work. Remember, he was still on sedation.

5th April
He went downhill, and they had to up his sedation again. They had to put gloves on him to stop him pulling everything out; I called them Mickey Mouse gloves because they looked like Mickey's hands. He managed to get one thumb out.

6th April
He was more settled, thank god.

7th April
They dropped his sedation once again, this time they dropped it to 3. They got him out of bed and sat him in a chair.

9th April
When I went to see him they said you can come in after the nurse has had a word with you. All sorts of things went through my mind. Had he taken a turn for the worst? If the poor man hasn't been through enough, he had been put in isolation because he had come down with MRSA (great) but luckily it wasn't that bad.
10th April They managed to get him off sedation completely, and they got him standing with a preacher frame (it looks like a tall Zimmer frame with arm rests) things were finally looking good. Believe me I cried that night.

13th April
They took him off ventilation.

14th April
He started to have speech therapy.

15th April
I didn't go in for three days because I was ill, yet again.
Because of all the tubes, wires, and machines, Mikey would not go and see his dad, but after they took his trachy out, he only had his feeding tube in, so Mikey and Michelle went to see their dad.

18th and 19th April
They started to give him a little to eat and drink, all he really wanted was a cup of tea. The nurses also took him for short walks down the ward with a walking frame.
I remember walking through the door in ITU and looking towards his bed he had seen me and was waving, I will never forget that.

20th April
They finally took him out of ITU and put him on ward 17, he hated it on there. He got a little depressed, but he also got a bit better when I took him a TV in.

The nurses from ITU would go down and take him for walks.

27th April
Mick was finally allowed home; because he was still very weak, we stayed at his sisters for a week. After eight weeks of being alone, when I got into bed that first night, all I wanted to do was wrap my arms around him and cuddle him all night, because after how ill he was I didn't think I would ever get that chance again.
He is such an enormous part of my life, and I love him with every bone in my body and always will.

I would like to thank all my family for keeping me going through it all.
Mikey, Michelle and Margaret for running me around and being there.
I love you all

I would also like to thank all the doctors and nurses for the care and attention you gave to Mick when he was so ill, and the way you also looked after me.
Many people don't realise what a brilliant job you all do, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for giving me my husband back, thank you.
(I love him so much)

Can I also thank Mike, and Pam, my bosses and all my workmates, and our friends for keeping me going every day and understanding what I was going through, I just don't know how I kept it all together for so long. I also apologise for the odd breakdown.

Also, I would like to thank Barrie for taking Shady in to watch over Mick, I must admit Shady did look scary, but he kept his eyes on Mick.
Thank you to all the Raven Riders for having Mick's bike cleaned while he was in hospital, he shed a few tears when I showed him what you had done.

Thank you, love to you all…

Afterthoughts

Welcome back, at the time of writing it has now been four and a half years since this journey began, I have experienced some really good times, and some really bad times, so here goes.

The Long and Winding Road:

When I was first released from the hospital, I was very weak after eight weeks of doing very little. Your muscle wastage becomes unbelievable, although I did not have a lot to begin with. I first discovered this when Yvonne brought me in a box of tissues to clean me up with after I had a coughing fit, she said I used to get in a right mess, bearing in mind I still had various pipes sticking out, I could not lift the box never mind opening it!

I can remember very little about when I came around as I was still confused (some say I still am). I can recall being told off for lifting my night shirt and scaring the nurses on shift. Maybe amusing is more like it, as they could see it on the CCTV at the nurses' station.

When Andrea said they would get me out of bed the next day, I thought, great I can have a smoke. WRONG! I thought I was going outside, but no, just to the chair by the side of the bed, oh well.

To this day, after four and a half years, I still have not had a smoke. It was a very expensive way of giving up smoking. Don't get me wrong, there are times when I could kill for one, but then I say. "I don't smoke," to myself.

Yvonne bought me a present one day from the league of friends, she knows my passion for aircraft so she got me the heaviest book on "Air wars over Vietnam" I had ever seen, I left that one till I got home..

When they got me up to get me walking, they had three things to try me with. Crutches, a zimmer frame, or the one I took a fancy to the most, a preacher's frame. Once they found out my height, they set it up, and it looked a long way to the top if I remember rightly. "Put your hands on top and haul yourself up." Holy shit, nearly sixty and I can't walk. After a few attempts and being told not to push with my hands on the chair (yes Elaine I remember). I finally made it, I reckon I stood up for a full three seconds, before landing on my arse back on the seat, you learn to trust when those nurses say, "we

have got you, it's ok," after a few failed attempts I managed it again but that was it, I was totally knackered, wow this was going to be along ride.
Finally, after a few days I was up and being taken for walks up and down the ward, but now with a Zimmer frame.
Then the day came when they managed to get rid of me to ward 17, it was a bit of a sad day for me, as I had got to know a few people who cared about others instead of themselves. I got to say a few goodbyes to the people who cared for me and looked after my family when things were not going well. One even got away from her training in maternity to say goodbye.

29

Ward 17

When I finally moved to ward seventeen just down the corridor from ITU, and a fairly new ward, I think it used to be offices; they put me in a room on my own, great; I did not fancy being on a ward and I wasn't going to argue. I was made welcome by the different staff after explaining that I had been in an induced coma for 6wks I was examined for bed sores and given the all clear (they did a magnificent job in ITU-HDU). They then gave me a conducted tour of my room with an on-suite bathroom. Very nice, but can I go home?
After a few visits from Dr M, I asked if I could go home? He said I had only just got there (8 f***ing weeks ago) never mind they know best. I was visited by Nurse Katy who talked to me for a while, asked how I was getting on, I again thanked her and all her colleagues for everything that they had done and she said. "It's our pleasure to see someone who was critically ill walk out of the door, they don't all make it." And I truly believe she meant every word she said. She took me for a little stroll along the corridor and back more than once. She was also to appear in my life later on. I had a visit from the resident depression doctor, who had a bit of a chat, I still wanted to go home.
Although my stay on ward 17 was a short one, about six days. I hated it, nothing to do with the staff, they were as usual brilliant, but suppose I was getting better and I wanted to go home.
I had my first proper drink in ward 17, a cup of tea, and it never tasted better, then after a SALT test I finally got some solid food, a baked potato, although I had been getting food, it was all blended and tasted the same. The food taste was solved when I went to

my sisters and she made me cheese on toast and it tasted like hospital food, I had not used my taste buds for 2 months, and it was the same for my reading, all I had seen was the back of my eyelids, and as for writing, well, we will not go there, but it gave Yvonne and my sister a laugh.

I can remember lying in bed in the morning with the television on and hearing that the Artist formally known as Prince had died. It appears that we had very similar symptoms, except I made it.

30

Last days

During one of my last visiting times I was overwhelmed by the amount of friends that came to see me, including my supervisor Gary. From what I was told later Gary thought the lads at work were winding him up, because he said there was no ward 17, it turned out to be a new ward, anyway; I know the lads, they would not wind him up, right (???).

31

Stair test

The final test, was a test of all tests (apart from me writing that line), it was the stair test or step test, if you failed this you were never allowed to leave (just kidding I think), this was conducted by Siobhan and Chelsea. Not knowing what to expect, I was very nervous. How high were these steps? What angle were they? How far apart were they? Then she says, “is the bannister on the left or right?” “Right going up,” I say with confidence. “OK,” she says, “we will use these.” Then she proceeds to use the stairs between floors. “Away you go when you get to the level turn around and come back down,” I fly up the stairs like a hundred-year-old man, “take your time, one step at a time, no rush.” Was I knackered, but another step closer to going home.

32

The day finally arrives

Wednesday 27t April

“Good morning Mick, get your stuff together, you are going home.” Those were the words I had been longing to hear for two weeks.

“What now? It’s only about 7:30 in the morning, my sister will still be in bed.”

“We will give her a call,” after a couple of minutes the nurse says, “your sister is on her way.”

They gave me some letters to show my doctor, told me to come back in six weeks for a chest x-ray, I borrowed two sets of zimmer frames, said my goodbyes and thank you’s and away we go.

WOW, the first time outside in the real world for two months, and it was cold, but I was going home.

Fifteen minutes later I arrived at the place where I lived the first twenty-odd years of my life, in a little village in Shropshire called High Ercall.

Sat in my now sisters house, she made me cheese on toast and a cup of tea, this is when we figured out why the food tasted all the same (taste buds not been used for two months) so I apologise to the people who I said the food was not very nice.

Still, with no strength to speak of getting around was difficult, a brief walk to the bathroom was a mammoth task, and getting off the seat was very embarrassing when you have to get help because of the lack of strength (sorry dear sister).

Sleeping at my sisters for a few days while I got accustomed to the real world again, and being with my loving wife Yvonne was such a relief, and slowly finding out what had happened, but I was still a little confused.

Going to bed involved me hauling myself up the stairs with Yvonne and my sis Margaret behind ready to catch me. Finally, I got into bed with the love of my life, for the first time in eight weeks. What a strange and wonderful feeling.

The first few days at my sisters was a bit strange, I could not do much, eventually I managed to come down the stairs on my own slowly, and persuaded her to fetch me my computer, or “my life line” as Yvonne calls it. Explaining to my Facebook friends where I had been for two months, obviously close friends knew where I was, not forgetting The Raven Riders, and the support they gave as well as our friends, and the flowers that my work colleagues had delivered to Yvonne’s workplace, along with lots of tears from her. As the week progressed, I finally went home after nine weeks.

33

Home at last

After about a week, Yvonne suggested we go for a brief walk up the road. Okay, with me all wrapped up, it was May but it felt like winter; we set off, and I managed about forty yards before I was knackered and we had to turn back, I realised this was going to take a long time. I can remember, I think it was Andrea, saying for every week you spend in bed it takes three to recover, it would take a long time then.

34

One step, two step

Yvonne suggested that to build up my strength I should try going up and down the first two steps of the stairs. So off I go, yes it seemed to work although I was booked in for physiotherapy, there was an eight week waiting list? Although she came out to see me, there was very little she could actually do.

After a few visits to the local practice for the odd check-up, Margaret eventually plucked up the courage to let me drive. Nice and steady. Someone later said to me. “I bet it was strange driving after all this time.” But to me, it felt like it was about four weeks.

As the weeks progressed my strength built up and I could walk down the road to see my wife at her place of work, it seemed three times further on the way back.

35

Frustrated

How long was I going to be like this? Sometimes I would be in bed and get so frustrated not being able to get comfy, not being able to roll over or sit up without tremendous effort. Am I always going to be like this? It was so frustrating having to plan every move, when I was in ITU I would have to move up the bed and wriggle like a little worm by pushing with my elbows and heels into the bed, once I got the hang of it I could move about six inches in five minutes.

We would spend many nights in tears trying to figure out when life would go back to normal and it will be a long old haul back to normality if ever.

36

Back to Hospital

It was time for my chest x-ray to see if the pneumonia had caused any lasting damage, after that was sorted out, it was time we paid a visit to the place I was lucky to be able to visit again and “some were not.” Nerveless I pressed the intercom, the one Yvonne and my sister had pressed sixty odd times before me.

“Hello can I help.” Came a voice.

I replied with. “Hi, it’s Mick Monaghan and Yvonne, we’ve come to say hello and thanks.” They greeted us with a lot of happy smiley face’s saying it was good to see me and Yvonne. We stayed for a while and were visited by Elaine from physiotherapy, who had heard we were back and she came up to see us. It sure was nice to see everybody, although I could not recall everyone because I was only awake for about a week before moving out. Two people who I could remember was Nurse Damo and Andrea, I think she was a ward sister? Although we got to meet them at a later date.

Yes, I returned the zimmer frames, one to Market Drayton Health Centre, and presented the other to Elaine on the first visit.

37

New heating system

While I was otherwise engaged in fighting battles, flying to Italy, and various other travels, poor Yvonne had to deal with a burst heating system. That was just what she needed, more shit to deal with. I think I had the easiest time, but she got it sorted and when the guy came around to install a new system, we got talking and he could not get his head around the thought of missing basically eight weeks off my life; I said it was not a problem.

After a few more weeks I visited my workplace and saw my work colleagues before all my hair fell out, we think it was all to do with the trauma and the medication whilst in hospital, because when it grew back it was lovely and curly and fluffy, now it’s just grey.

38

Ice cream by the sea

As the weeks passed and I slowly got my strength back, I started to get strange thoughts about why me? And will I ever get better? Baring in mind that I had never

really been this ill before. I once broke my collarbone playing football, and after six weeks I went to the Doc's too late. Now I have a lumpy collar bone and various bangs and scrapes, and I have seen the main artery in my leg.

Being the middle of the year the weather was sunny, so the lad offered to take us for a day out to our favourite holiday spot, Barmouth.

After a steady drive we arrived, a slow walk around and then off to the campsite to see Deb and Richard the owners, we had a cup of tea and then drove home; I was totally knackered.

Although I find it easy to recall the time I spent in hospital, I struggle to remember later events and my memory has not really improved.

Still looking forward to getting back to work, we had two weeks away in the caravan at Barmouth.

39

Return to work

After what seemed like an eternity, actually it was seven months before I eventually returned to work. I started with four hours a day and slowly built it up to eight hours.

I must admit, it was really strange going back after all that time, although everything seemed the same as when I first went off ill, after a short while it seemed as if I was no longer part of the team, I don't know why it seemed like that maybe it was me trying to figure out my life again, and why all this had happened to me? Some of my work mate's seemed to be concerned, one or two just thought I was after sympathy. All these things went around in my head, I thought it would all calm down after a while.

40

If only

As the time passed, I used to get strange thoughts going around in my head, like, "what if, or if only."

What if I had not come around? I would not know about it, just darkness or nothingness I presume, no more worries, no more hassle. I know after what all the dedicated staff and loving family and friends had done, this sounds ungrateful, I do not mean it to be, but my brain was working differently.

I have always been afraid of dying, but now I don't seem to be too bothered, don't get me wrong, I don't want to die yet, but it doesn't shit me up as much as it used to.

41

Doctor Doctor Please

After a few tearful hearts to hearts with Yvonne, we sought some help as my depression was getting worse. We got in touch with ITU and asked if there was anyone who knew about depression after being in a coma;I spoke to one of the physiotherapist who put me in touch with Nurse K and Dr D, and we arranged a meeting. We have met a couple of times since, and we were due to meet around the time of the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus.

I got to see a counsellor after a while, but that proved a waste of time for me.

We are in the middle of a Covid-19 virus outbreak as I write this final bit, I still suffer from depression and I'm waiting to see a counsellor again, but Covid-19 is stopping that, but I seem to be getting it under control with medication. If you suffer from this, do not try to hide it, get some help, that's what I did. I don't think I am the same person who went in all that time ago, and I don't think I ever will be, but I am still here. Some never made it. Maybe next time you talk to a stranger you might find that they had a life that would surprise you.

One thing that keeps me going with life is my Family, Friends, and my wife, and support from various places.

I hope you enjoy this read, but please bear in mind that I am not an author. I was encouraged to write this by various people, so don't blame me! Enjoy.

Mike & Yvonne

P.S.

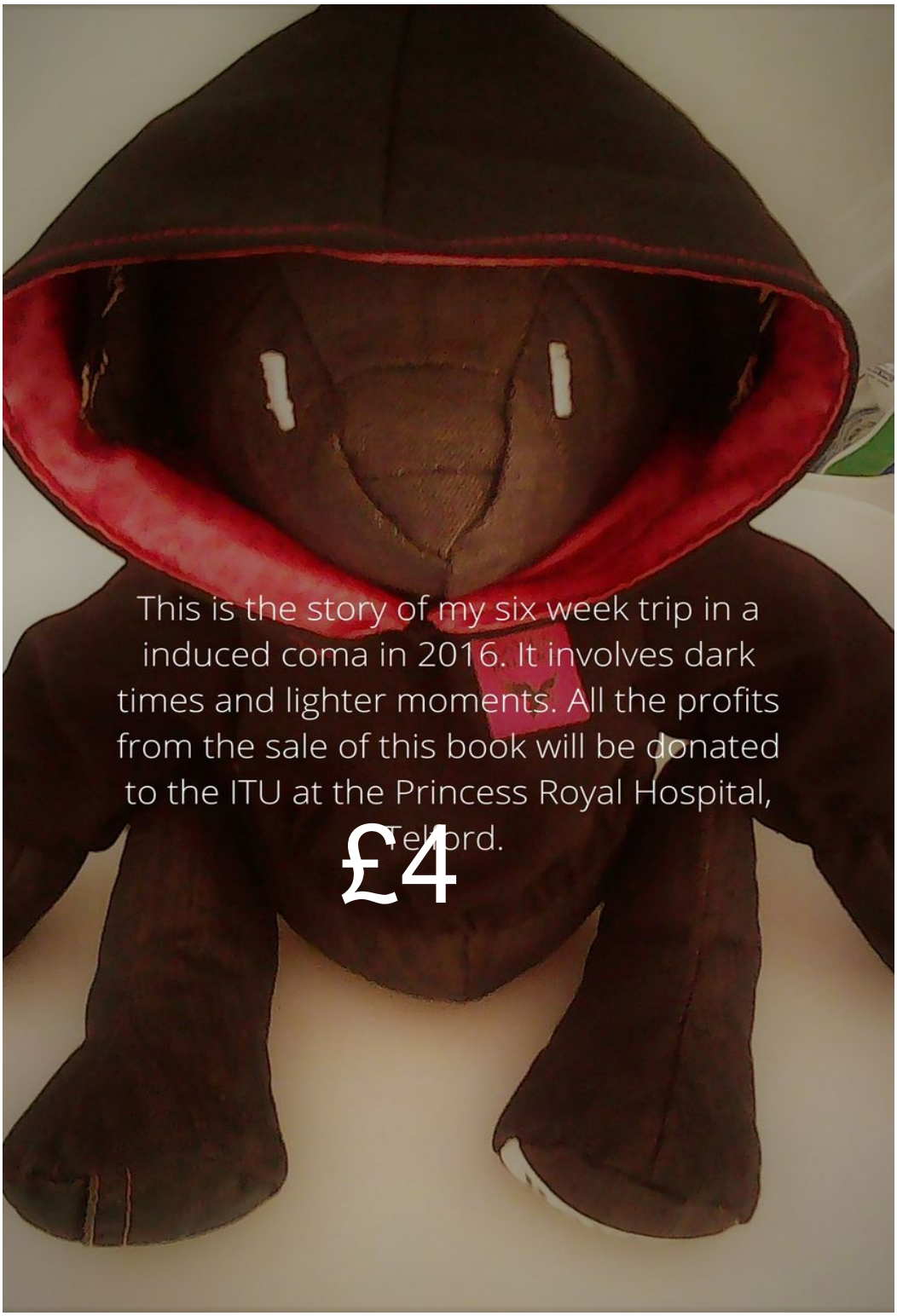
No Meerkats were harmed in in the production of this book.

THE END

Credits to

Ian Steventon for sorting it out.

Millie Doody Glenholmes for the NHS Rainbow.


This is the story of my six week trip in a induced coma in 2016. It involves dark times and lighter moments. All the profits from the sale of this book will be donated to the ITU at the Princess Royal Hospital, Telford.
£4